

Wm Owen

Oct - 1880

1830.



WM COBBETT, ESQ.

PICKERING & Co

ENGLISHMEN READ!!!

A PLAIN

LETTER TO THE KING,

FROM

THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND;

CONTAINING A FAITHFUL STATEMENT OF FACTS, WITH A

List of Sinécures & Pensions,

AMOUNTING TO

UPWARDS OF TEN MILLIONS ANNUALLY

RECEIVED BY THE NOBILITY FOR DOING NOTHING.

A LETTER TO THE KING.

WE approach your Majesty, not as blind adorers of royalty, but as faithful and dutiful subjects, whose fidelity and duty are founded in our conviction, that, in highly honouring and cheerfully obeying your Majesty, in upholding, with all our might, your just prerogatives, and evincing our most profound respect for your person, we best consult our own welfare, knowing that you are endowed with those prerogatives for the common good of us all, and not for your own exclusive advantage.

That feeling ourselves thus bound to your Majesty, not by harsh constraint, but by a willing obedience arising from a due estimate of our own interest and honour, regarding your person as sacred, not from servility of mind, but because you are the fountain of justice and mercy, taught by the laws of our country that kings were made for the people and not the people for kings, regarding your kingly powers as given to you for the purpose of preserving the peace, the rights, and the happiness of the people, and more especially for the defence and protection of the weak against the strong, of the poor against the unjust encroachments of the rich, of the fruits of industry against the wiles and the violence of aristocratical ambition, arrogance and rapacity; animated by all these considerations, and beholding in your Majesty's most gracious conduct and demeanour an indubitable proof of your anxious desire to promote our good by a redress of our grievances, we, with the confidence with which suffering children appeal to a tender father, lay those grievances before your Majesty.

We complain not of the form of that Government which has endured for so many ages, and under which our fathers were so free, lived in such ease and abundance, and saw their country so great and so much honoured throughout the world; we complain not of the nature of the institutions of our country which have stood the test of centuries; we complain not of any thing, an attack on which would argue a hawking after innovation; but, on the contrary, it is of innovations, innovations endless in number, cruelly oppressive, and studiously insulting that we have now to make complaint to your Majesty.

That we complain, generally, that the whole of the laws passed within the last forty years, and especially within the last twenty years, present one unbroken series of endeavours to enrich and to augment the power of the aristocracy, and to impoverish and depress the middle and labouring part of the people; and that to give your Majesty a specimen of

the wrongs and indignities heaped upon us, we specifically complain that the trial by jury, held so sacred by our fathers and provided for by Magna Charta, as so necessary to the protection of the people, has, in a great measure, been taken from us, leaving us to be fined, imprisoned, corporally punished, and, in some cases, transported without trial by jury, and at the sole discretion of magistrates, appointed by and dismissable at the pleasure of your Majesty's Ministers: we complain that within the last forty years the most grievous taxes have been laid upon us for the benefit of the aristocracy, to heap riches upon them in the shape of pensions, sinecures, and places; a list we have placed at the end of this letter: we complain, that the two families of Grenville and Dundas have, during the last forty years, received more money in sinecures alone than it has cost, during the same time to maintain the whole of the civil government of the United States of America: we complain that the Duke of Wellington has received from the public purse, no less a sum than, per annum - - - - - £700,000

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|---|--------|
| In addition to which, he receives annually, in places | |
| and pensions | 12,000 |
| Lord Maryborough (his brother) receives, as | |
| Master of the Buck-hounds! | 3,000 |
| Lord Cowley (another brother) receives | 12,000 |
| Marquis Wellesley (another brother) receives | 4,000 |
| A sinecure in the Court of Exchequer in Ireland, | |
| with reversion to the Marquis's illegitimate | |
| son!!! who now enjoys | 1,200 |
| The Rev. Gerald Wellesley! (another brother) | |
| receives in church preferments | 7,000 |
| Lady Mornington (his mother) receives a pension of | 1,000 |
| Lady Anne Smith (his sister) receives a pension of | 800 |
| Her husband (Mr. Smith) a place | 1,200 |
| Lord Burghersh (who married his niece) | 4,000 |
| Sir Charles Bagot (who married another niece) | |
| receives | 12,600 |
| Lord Fitzroy Somerset (who married another | |
| niece) receives | 2,000 |

We complain, that while the laws and usages of our country hold standing armies in abhorrence, and while they are wholly unnecessary to our country, especially in time of peace, we are now taxed, at the end of sixteen years of peace, to maintain a standing army that costs more yearly than the army that was maintained during the American war, when we had war also with France, Spain, and Holland, and this, too, while we have, besides the yeomanry, a militia of sixty thousand men always ready to be called out: we complain, that at the end of sixteen years of peace we are taxed to maintain a navy which costs five millions a-year,

while the navy cost only seven millions a-year when we were carrying on war against America, France, Spain, and Holland: we complain that in this peace, which was to give us indemnity for the past and security for the future, we are loaded with taxes twice as heavy as those which were required during the war against all those powers; we complain that the emoluments arising from these establishments are engrossed, for the far greater part, by the aristocracy and their dependents, for whose sole benefit they appear to exist to this enormous extent, a conclusion fully warranted when we see that we have three generals for every regiment of soldiers, two admirals for every ship of the line, that we have, taking both services together, one commissioned officer to every five private men, and especially when we look at the families and connexions from which all the officers come: we complain that, in the navy, the bulwark of our country, promotion and power are so bestowed, that sons of the aristocracy, who were children at the end of the war, have the command of ships, and have under them masters and lieutenants, who were fighting at sea before these commanders were born: we complain that, in pursuance of this system of aggrandising the aristocracy at the expence, and to the depressing of the middle and working classes, military and naval and ordnance academies have been established, for the rearing of officers for the army and navy, and that in these the children of the aristocracy and their dependents are nursed, fed, clad, and taught at the public expence, so that, the middling and working class are compelled to pay for the nursing and feeding of the children of the aristocracy, and that, too, for the manifest purpose of excluding for ever hereafter their own children and kindred from all chance, and even all possibility, of possessing military or naval command: we complain of the establishment of military asylums for rearing up the children of soldiers in ease and comfort at the public expence, the children of working men being, under like circumstances, treated as paupers, while their fathers are compelled to pay taxes to support these asylums: we complain, that, in accordance with this system of establishing a permanent military force, while the pay of the private soldier has been so augmented as to make it, over and above his clothing and lodging and fuel, greater than the average wages of the hard-working man, the soldier, like the aristocracy, is excused from paying postage on his letters, while the hard-working and half-starved man, who is taxed to maintain that well-fed and well-clad soldier, is not so excused: we complain, that we have been taxed to give half-pay, in the army and navy, to a large part of the clergy of the established church, who, for twelve years, were receiving tithes, Easter-offerings, and other dues, as rectors and vicars, and at the same time receiving military or naval half-pay, and

who, at the end of that time, were allowed to sell, or transfer, this half-pay, still leaving it a charge upon this burdened and suffering people: we complain, that within the last thirty years, 1,600,000*l.* have been paid out of the taxes for, as was alleged, “the relief of the poor clergy of the church of England,” while the bishops of that church have revenues from ten to forty thousand pounds a year, while the Deans and Chapters have wealth enormous, while there are numbers of the aristocratical clergy who have two, three, or more benefices each: we complain, not only of the weight of the axes arising from the afore-mentioned causes, but of their partial imposition, falling as they do, like feathers on the aristocracy, and like lead on the middle and working class: we complain, that the taxes on the malt, the sugar, the tea or the spirits, amount on either of these articles, to more than the tax on all the lands in the kingdom: we complain, that while foreign wine pays a duty of fifty per cent on its value, foreign spirits pay four hundred per cent: we complain that, of the more than two millions a year raised by the tax on letters received by the post, the aristocracy pay not one single farthing: we complain, that, as if all these were not enough, a Corn Bill has been passed, and has been in force for fifteen years, giving the aristocracy a monopoly of that necessary of life, shutting out food while it was asserted by those who made the law, that there were too many mouths, compelling manufacturers to buy their bread dear and to sell their goods and labour cheap, sacrificing all the rest of the community to the greediness of the owners of the land: we complain, that the game-laws, always unjust in principle, always at war with the rights of nature and the dictates of reason, have, within the last fifteen years become tenfold more cruel than formerly, for that to pecuniary penalties, or short imprisonment, for an infraction of those laws are now added long imprisonment, corporal punishment, and transportation beyond the seas for seven years, and these too, at the sole discretion of the justices of the peace, appointed by and dismissable at the pleasure of the Ministers of the day: we complain, that the working people having been, by the weight of the taxes on the necessities of life, reduced to a state of pauperism, laws were next made to prevent them from obtaining parochial relief as heretofore: we complain, that, within these twelve years, two acts have been passed, one to throw the power of vestries into the hands of all the landowners, and another to enable those landowners to set at defiance even the power of the magistrates to cause relief to be given: we complain, that, in consequence of these taxes, this monopoly in corn, and the severities on the working people, of which we have here given merely a specimen, the working people of England, once the best fed, best clad, and

most moral in the world, have become the most miserable and degraded to be found on the face of the earth, those of unhappy Ireland only excepted: we complain, that the land-owners compel them to draw carts and waggons like beasts of burden, that they keep men forcibly from their wives for a purpose too gross to mention, that others forbid them to marry upon pain of being left to beg or starve, and that others sell them by the week or month by public auction: we complain that the House of Commons, though fully apprised of all this suffering, though they have, in evidence given before their committées, proof upon proof of the wretchedness of the people, though they have in evidence, that the honest working man is fed worse than the convicted felons in the gaols and the hulks, though it has been proved to them that the working people commit crimes for the express purpose of getting at the better fare in the prisons; though they have been fully informed upon all these points, though they must be acquainted with the notorious facts, that the working people have, in many instances, resorted to the food of hogs and dogs, and have in many others been actually starved to death, they have adopted no measure for their relief, but measures innumerable for their punishment, closing, at last, with a bill to authorise the keepers of poor-houses and hospitals to sell their dead bodies for dissection, and thus, in this signal respect, putting the honest, worn-out or unfortunate man upon a level with the murderer!

That to our gracious and just and merciful King we complain, as of the real cause of all these oppressions and sufferings, that we are not represented in that which is called and ought to be, the Commons' or people's House of Parliament: we complained, that though it had been stated to that House in 1793, without an attempt at contradiction, that one hundred and fifty-four peers and great commoners and the treasury put a decided majority into the House, and though, in 1809, the House had proof tendered (which it would not receive) that two of the Ministers had actually sold a seat in the House, yet when, in 1817, we petitioned for such a reform as would put an end to such odious practices, that House, instead of listening to our humble prayers, passed a law which enabled the Ministers to put us into dungeons at their pleasure, deprived of the sight of friends and of the use of pen, ink, and paper, which law was carried into effect with unheard-of severity and cruelty.

Thus, may it please your Majesty, we have, in all humility and dutifulness, submitted to your wisdom and justice a statement of a part of our manifold greivances and sufferings: we have, in the sincerity of our hearts, expressed to you our firm conviction, that all these have arisen from our not being represented in parliament and as the means of

restoring us to liberty and happiness, as the means of uniting all hearts in preserving the peace of our country and upholding the dignity and true splendour of your Majesty's crown, we humbly but earnestly pray, that of those great powers with which your Majesty is invested for the good of your faithful people, you will be graciously pleased to make such use as shall produce a reform in the Commons' House, ensuring to all adult males, not insane and not tarnished by indellible crime, a voice, given by ballot, in the choosing of representatives, and as shall shorten the duration of Parliaments.

NICE PICKINGS.

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| The Marquis of Bute and family receive | - | £66,811 |
| 399 Peers, sitting in Parliament, and their families, receive from the Taxes | - | 2,754,336 |
| 209 Peers, not sitting in Parliament, and their families receive | - | 978,000 |
| | | <hr/> |
| | | £3,732,336 |

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|--------------------------|-------------------|-----|--------|
| Lord Eldon | - | - | 50,400 |
| The Duke of Beaufort | - | - | 48,600 |
| The Earl of Lauderdale | - | - | 33,600 |
| Lord Beresford | - | - | 29,000 |
| The Duke of Newcastle | - | - | 19,900 |
| Archbishop of Canterbury | (176 livings) | and | 41,100 |
| Bishop of Durham | (livings unknown) | and | 61,700 |
| Bishop of London | (95 livings) | and | 10,200 |
| Bishop of Lichfield | (48 livings) | and | 12,590 |
| Bishop of St. Asaph | (90 livings) | and | 7,000 |
| Bishop of Bath and Wells | (27 livings) | and | 7,330 |
| Bishop of Chester | (30 livings) | and | 4,700 |
| Bishop of Chichester | (36 livings) | and | 6,770 |
| Bishop of Ely | (108 livings) | and | 21,340 |
| Bishop of Lincoln | (36 livings) | and | 8,280 |
| Bishop of Norwich | (40 livings) | and | 8,370 |
| Bishop of Oxford | (11 livings) | and | 3,500 |
| Bishop of Rochester | (21 livings) | and | 5,400 |
| Bishop of Salisbury | (40 livings) | and | 14,420 |
| Bishop of Cloyne | (great Patronage) | and | 7,500 |

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|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| Total | 467,511 |
| Which added to the aforesaid sum of | 3,732,336 |

Amounts to the sum of 4,199,847
Which will maintain 83,997 Families, at £50 a year